

MARTIN DALY in New York talks to one of the most sought after actresses in Hollywood.

KATHLEEN

Playing the elitist role

THE room temperature appeared to jump suddenly. The Queen of Curves had just arrived.

Taller than imagined, friendly, choking with a cold but still stunning, the lady ordered coffee and lit her first cigarette.

Her hands moved like wildfire, suggesting a Latin heritage. She sat back in a revolving chair, back and forth she went, hands moving, smoke wafting and she spoke with only one immediate concern:

"I've got a cold," said the husky, sensuous voice, "so please don't take any pictures of me when I'm blowing my nose."

Kathleen Turner, the macho man's beefcake, who admits she has breasts too small for sex-goddess status — but that she makes up for the deficiency in the legs department — cheated a little on this day. She wore a pants suit.

That's like Charlton Heston without his chariot, but even Turner is allowed protection against the inclement New York weather which she endures from the comforts of her Greenwich Village home with her husband.

The lady appears to be all they say she is. She's a little too small all around to be termed "Amazonian" but those eyes, one minute bright, bouncing, smiling, the next dark and brooding are just as magical as they say.

She knows all about her figure. She's 172 cm, has size 10 shoulders and a size eight body, which she once considered to be pretty close to that of an ugly duckling.

But that was years ago when Turner was a teenager and carrying a lot of puppy fat.

She knows now that she can walk into any room when she does herself up and that all eyes will be on her.

"And if there's a man who doesn't look at me, it's because he's gay," is one of Turner's more famous quotes.

Turner has a way of saying things like that without appearing to be overburdened with vanity.

She has grown up to be a big girl who well understands the power of her persona, the bankability of her legs, her talent as an actress and the importance of brain power.

Somewhere along the line she learned to flirt. And like everything else, she does it beautifully.

Michael Douglas once remarked that the only reason she wanted to go to Milan was so she could flirt with the men.

"There is some truth to it," joked Turner with one of those wimpish smiles that one can only inherit, never contrive.

Her voice is distinctive, her outlook is broad and within her breast she appears to harbor a disdain for Hollywood and all the glitz which appears to say that sex, status and money make the world go around.

Turner is a snob. She might prefer to term herself "elitist" but the fact is that Turner is different from many of those on the Hollywood scene and she knows it.

One way of explaining this is to say: "I have a very different background from many of the actresses and so, perhaps, that causes me to look at things differently, to approach things in a different way at times... not the same as most American actresses."



TURNER and Michael Douglas in *Romancing the Stone*.

What Turner means is that they lack the education she has had and the exposure at an early age to various cultures around the world.

"I suppose in the sense that I was brought up in such a way... I was brought up in good schools — and I think in some way they were superior to American public schools at the time.

"In a sense I suppose I am snobbish about that; about having a level of education and background in literature which I don't find in many of my compatriots."

Kathleen Turner considers it important to find equals with whom she can interact on an intellectual, as well as a personal, level. But she finds the task to be difficult.

"Wow", says the mistress of film, "if that doesn't sound elitist, then what does?"

Perhaps the lady was just referring to Hollywood. "No", she says. "I didn't mean just Hollywood, I meant just everywhere."

She frequently gives the impression that she does not want to be tagged a sex symbol.

"I think that a certain amount of sensuality and the ability to use one's attractiveness is very helpful in films," she explains.

But doesn't she get raves because of her appearance and her sexuality?

"I never quite felt I was a sex symbol per se. I always sort of feel that has a connotation of the person having no other character."

Turner, however, knows how to utilise her talents and what the lady has, the lady intends to use.

"Certainly as long as I am young enough and attractive enough I intend to make use of that, why not? I mean it will be soon enough that I will be playing mothers and grandmothers."

The actress, herself, never really went for good looks in her men.

"I have never really been attracted to very beautiful men in the sense of the sort of beach boy American, blond hunk style.

"Personally, I find the competition too stiff, so I'm more attracted to a man with a certain amount of confidence. I think that is very important, a man who has a sense of himself and who doesn't actually need me to build him up."

Turner is a doer. She works hard and by all accounts she plays hard too. She plays in a band with her husband and a group of friends. She considers the band to be "very good".

"If we get really good we will open it up to the public," she says.

"At the moment its fun doing it for friends. They're not so critical."

Kathleen Turner's chances of success in life were, perhaps, better than most considering her background. Her mother once told her children that the odds were in their favor because of their education and their abilities.

Her father was a diplomat — which meant the Turner clan attended elite schools around the world, learned languages and became exposed to cultures which ordinarily would have come only with travel in later years.

She lived in Canada, Cuba, Venezuela, and England before the age of 17 and found it quite a shock when she had to return to the US for school after her father died.

Her introduction to theatre came when she was in England.

"It was a rather avant-garde high school... my friends were all interested in theatre so we wrote, directed, produced, and acted in our own productions," she said.

In the US, she continued in the arts after graduation, taking roles in a number

of off-Broadway productions until she was offered her first steady job — a starring role as Nola Aldrich in the soap opera series, *The Doctors*.

She later became the sultry seductress in *Body Heat*, followed by the heartless wife in *The Man With Two Brains*, the adventuress in *Romancing The Stone* and *Jewel of the Nile*, the business woman by day — prostitute by night — in *Crimes of Passion* and the female assassin in *Prizzi's Honor*.

Michael Douglas and the movie studio had to twist her arm to make her appear in *Jewel Of the Nile*.

She didn't like the script and wanted out. But she changed her mind after they threatened her with a \$34 million lawsuit.

She has just made a film in Italy called *Guila and Guila* with Irish actor Gabriel Byrne about a woman with two lives.

Her husband in the movie is killed in a car crash shortly after their marriage.

She goes to work in a travel agency and six years later she returns home one day to find her husband waiting for her as if the accident had not happened.

"And she wakes up the next morning and she has a son. It is a whole parallel life, had he not died. What her life would be like with a son, a lover, played by Sting."

She enjoyed working with Sting but thinks he takes life "a little too seriously for my taste. I like to have fun. I like taking the work seriously, but I do not like taking myself too seriously."

Turner is notorious for sticking her head into books. She carries one at all times in case someone is late for an appointment and she can utilise the time doing what she very much enjoys.

She rarely turns on the TV and does so only to watch the news.

One book she read recently, *A Flag for Sunrise* by Robert Stone, caught her im-

agination so much that she plans to make it into a movie. She will be the producer and the star of the saga which is set in Central America.

In the meantime, Turner is working on her New York home with her husband, starring in a stage production of *Camille* — it got rotten reviews — and is sitting back taking the credits for *Peggy Sue Got Married*, a back-to-the-future type movie about a 42-year-old woman who goes back in time and is given an opportunity to not make the same mistakes again in life.

The crucial decision in the film is if she should marry her husband, with whom she had a terrible time and is suing for divorce because he ran off with a younger woman.

The concept of a 42-year-old woman going back to become a 17-year-old, but retaining the mental attitudes of the older woman, works brilliantly even though Turner had initial doubts about playing someone so young.

She didn't like the clothes she had to wear in the movie either.

"I was five years old or something when that era took place and I hated the clothes. I've got to tell you, women are doing a lot better now, not to have to wear those girdles and bras. They're appalling," she says.

Debra Winger had been selected for the lead role in the movie but dropped out.

"I think it would have been quite different with Winger," says Turner. "I think she is a talented actress, it's just that we would have done it very differently."

And how does she feel about taking the role Winger had refused. "Do I feel second bested? Do I feel I was the second choice? Absolutely not. I am the one who did it," she said.



TURNER... proud of her "elite" background.